



**Joint Committee of Education and Appropriations  
Public Hearing Testimony  
SB 1096 & HB 6757  
March 1, 2023**

Chairs Currey and McCrory, Ranking members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Cassandra Gallion, and I am the Policy Director for the Connecticut Charter Schools Association. CTCSA represents the nearly 11,000 students who attend Connecticut's 21 public charter schools. *I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on charter school authorization and for your leadership in raising this bill before the committee once again.*

**S.B. 1096 – SUPPORTS WITH MODIFICATIONS**

By large, the CTCSA supports S.B. 1096. This legislation approaches a solution to reversing the negative impacts caused by legislation implemented in the 2015 session. Under this raised bill, the State Department of Education will have the ability to grant a charter to a new public charter school. Current law has created an obstructive system that makes it extremely difficult for an approved school to receive authorization. The current process we are speaking on today involves coordination with 3 different entities and multiple steps stalling the process.

*The total timeline for a charter school to be approved from the RFP announcement to a school formally opening was historically 2 years prior to the current change.*

*We are now on year 5 for 2 schools stuck in this process. I do agree with a former panelist, our authorization process IS deeply flawed. Now 2 schools are in the pipeline and due process was followed to the letter of the law by both schools, but we know current law will place them in the same situation despite approval by SBE today.*

Additionally, this legislation creates a nonlapsing account in the General Fund that will sanction SDE to fund charters approved by the State Board of Education known as the charter school approval grant account. These funds will be expended upon the granting of a charter in a fair and appropriate timeline through legislative budgetary power (maintaining legislative oversight and upholding the democratic process many today have feared would be lost). This bill



also would ensure any unexpended funds appropriated will not lapse but be deposited into the charter school approval grant account.

The Association would like to offer recommendations to this legislation. We recommend legislation that essentially aids schools trapped in the current process since the legislative change in 2015.

1. Reverse back to before the current law was implemented (maybe its a coincidence the bill is SB1096, just as it was in 2015 when the process took a wrong turn and resulted in today's dilemma); or
2. Have inclusionary language that would permit the potential new schools in the pipeline to receive their charter, not an initial certification

Additionally, lines 249-252 would place a cap on the number of charter schools that may be approved in a fiscal year. This would prevent charter growth in our state. A charter cap would prevent quality public charter schools from opening in the state, limiting options for students and parents.

Finally, we recommend including language to compel the State Department of Education to release a Request for Proposal on an annual basis. There is no statute requiring a scheduled Request for Proposal for new schools. The most recent RFPs were released in 2022 and 2015– 7 years apart.

### **H.B. 6757 – Opposes**

Connecticut's students and the education system deserves the best. The legislation before us removes standards that should be upheld for proper measure. Removing "academic" from the law removes the basis of education. Enabling municipal decisions would negatively impact high-need districts, such as all public charter school districts, student growth and outcomes.

Thank you for your time.

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